The Black Cat

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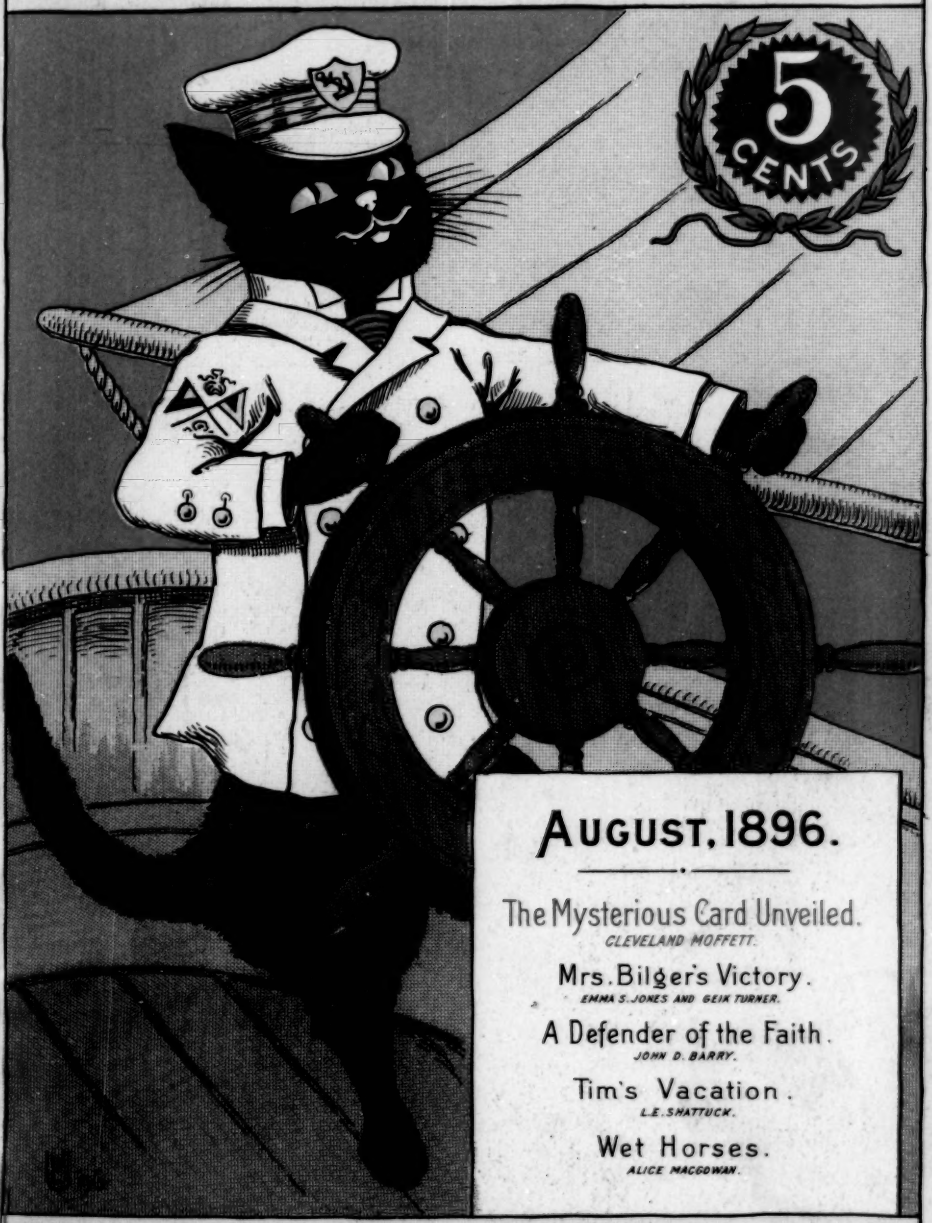

AUGUST, 1896.

The Mysterious Card Unveiled.
CLEVELAND MOFFETT.

Mrs. Bilger's Victory.
EMMA S. JONES AND GEIX TURNER.

A Defender of the Faith.
JOHN D. BARRY.

Tim's Vacation.
L.E. SHATTUCK.

Wet Horses.
ALICE MACGOWAN.

THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO. 144 HIGH ST. BOSTON, MASS.

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"The Mysterious Card."

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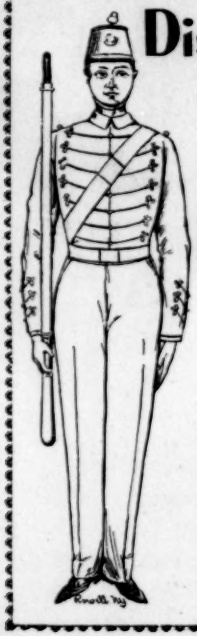

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The Black Cat

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The Mysterious Card Unveiled.

BY CLEVELAND MOFFETT.

NO physician was ever more scrupulous than I have been, during my thirty years of practice, in observing the code of professional secrecy; and it is only for grave reasons, partly in the interests of medical science, largely as a warning to intelligent people, that I place upon record the following statements.

One morning a gentleman called at my offices to consult me about some nervous trouble. From the moment I saw him, the man made a deep impression on me, not so much by the pallor and worn look of his face as by a certain intense sadness in his eyes, as if all hope had gone out of his life. I wrote a prescription for him, and advised him to try the benefits of an ocean voyage. He seemed to shiver at the idea, and said that he had been abroad too much, already.

As he handed me my fee, my eye fell upon the palm of his hand, and I saw there, plainly marked on the Mount of Saturn, a cross surrounded by two circles. I should explain that for the greater part of my life I have been a constant and enthusiastic student of palmistry. During my travels in the Orient, after taking my degree, I spent months studying this fascinating art at the best sources of information in the world. I have read every-

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thing published on palmistry in every known language, and my library on the subject is perhaps the most complete in existence. In my time I have examined at least fourteen thousand palms, and taken casts of many of the more interesting of them. But I had never seen such a palm as this; at least, never but once, and the horror of the case was so great that I shudder even now when I call it to mind.

"Pardon me," I said, keeping the patient's hand in mine, "would you let me look at your palm?"

I tried to speak indifferently, as if the matter were of small consequence, and for some moments I bent over the hand in silence. Then, taking a magnifying glass from my desk, I looked at it still more closely. I was not mistaken; here was indeed the sinister double circle on Saturn's mount, with the cross inside,—a marking so rare as to portend some stupendous destiny of good or evil, more probably the latter.

I saw that the man was uneasy under my scrutiny, and, presently, with some hesitation, as if mustering courage, he asked: "Is there anything remarkable about my hand?"

"Yes," I said, "there is. Tell me, did not something very unusual, something very horrible, happen to you about ten or eleven years ago?"

I saw by the way the man started that I had struck near the mark, and, studying the stream of fine lines that crossed his life-line from the mount of Venus, I added: "Were you not in some foreign country at that time?"

The man's face blanched, but he only looked at me steadily out of those mournful eyes. Now I took his other hand, and compared the two, line by line, mount by mount, noting the short square fingers, the heavy thumb, with amazing will-power in its upper joint, and gazing again and again at that ominous sign on Saturn.

"Your life has been strangely unhappy, your years have been clouded by some evil influence."

"My God," he said weakly, sinking into a chair, "how can you know these things?"

"It is easy to know what one sees," I said, and tried to draw him out about his past, but the words seemed to stick in his throat.

"I will come back and talk to you again," he said, and he went away without giving me his name or any revelation of his life.

Several times he called during subsequent weeks, and gradually seemed to take on a measure of confidence in my presence. He would talk freely of his physical condition, which seemed to cause him much anxiety. He even insisted upon my making the most careful examination of all his organs, especially of his eyes, which, he said, had troubled him at various times. Upon making the usual tests, I found that he was suffering from a most uncommon form of color blindness, that seemed to vary in its manifestations, and to be connected with certain hallucinations or abnormal mental states which recurred periodically, and about which I had great difficulty in persuading him to speak. At each visit I took occasion to study his hand anew, and each reading of the palm gave me stronger conviction that here was a life mystery that would abundantly repay any pains taken in unravelling it.

While I was in this state of mind, consumed with a desire to know more of my unhappy acquaintance and yet not daring to press him with questions, there came a tragic happening that revealed to me with startling suddenness the secret I was bent on knowing. One night, very late, — in fact it was about four o'clock in the morning, — I received an urgent summons to the bedside of a man who had been shot. As I bent over him I saw that it was my friend, and for the first time I realized that he was a man of wealth and position, for he lived in a beautifully furnished house filled with art treasures and looked after by a retinue of servants. From one of these I learned that he was Richard Burwell, one of New York's most respected citizens — in fact, one of her best-known philanthropists, a man who for years had devoted his life and fortune to good works among the poor.

But what most excited my surprise was the presence in the house of two officers, who informed me that Mr. Burwell was under arrest, charged with murder. The officers assured me that it was only out of deference to his well-known standing in the community that the prisoner had been allowed the privilege of receiving medical treatment in his own home; their orders were peremptory to keep him under close surveillance.

Giving no time to further questionings, I at once proceeded to

examine the injured man, and found that he was suffering from a bullet wound in the back at about the height of the fifth rib. On probing for the bullet, I found that it had lodged near the heart, and decided that it would be exceedingly dangerous to try to remove it immediately. So I contented myself with administering a sleeping potion.

As soon as I was free to leave Burwell's bedside I returned to the officers and obtained from them details of what had happened. A woman's body had been found a few hours before, shockingly mutilated, on Water Street, one of the dark ways in the swarming region along the river front. It had been found at about two o'clock in the morning by some printers from the office of the *Courier des Etats Unis*, who, in coming from their work, had heard cries of distress and hurried to the rescue. As they drew near they saw a man spring away from something huddled on the sidewalk, and plunge into the shadows of the night, running from them at full speed.

Suspecting at once that here was the mysterious assassin so long vainly sought for many similar crimes, they dashed after the fleeing man, who darted right and left through the maze of dark streets, giving out little cries like a squirrel as he ran. Seeing that they were losing ground, one of the printers fired at the fleeing shadow, his shot being followed by a scream of pain, and hurrying up they found a man writhing on the ground. The man was Richard Burwell.

The news that my sad-faced friend had been implicated in such a revolting occurrence shocked me inexpressibly, and I was greatly relieved the next day to learn from the papers that a most unfortunate mistake had been made. The evidence given before the coroner's jury was such as to abundantly exonerate Burwell from all shadow of guilt. The man's own testimony, taken at his bedside, was in itself almost conclusive in his favor. When asked to explain his presence so late at night in such a part of the city, Burwell stated that he had spent the evening at the Florence Mission, where he had made an address to some unfortunates gathered there, and that later he had gone with a young missionary worker to visit a woman living on Frankfort Street, who was dying of consumption. This statement was borne out

by the missionary worker himself, who testified that Burwell had been most tender in his ministrations to the poor woman and had not left her until death had relieved her sufferings.

Another point which made it plain that the printers had mistaken their man in the darkness, was the statement made by all of them that, as they came running up, they had overheard some words spoken by the murderer, and that these words were in their own language, French. Now it was shown conclusively that Burwell did not know the French language, that indeed he had not even an elementary knowledge of it.

Another point in his favor was a discovery made at the spot where the body was found. Some profane and ribald words, also in French, had been scrawled in chalk on the door and doorsill, being in the nature of a coarse defiance to the police to find the assassin, and experts in handwriting who were called testified unanimously that Burwell, who wrote a refined, scholarly hand, could never have formed those misshapen words.

Furthermore, at the time of his arrest no evidence was found on the clothes or person of Burwell, nothing in the nature of bruises or bloodstains that would tend to implicate him in the crime. The outcome of the matter was that he was honorably discharged by the coroner's jury, who were unanimous in declaring him innocent, and who brought in a verdict that the unfortunate woman had come to her death at the hand of some person or persons unknown.

On visiting my patient late on the afternoon of the second day I saw that his case was very grave, and I at once instructed the nurses and attendants to prepare for an operation. The man's life depended upon my being able to extract the bullet, and the chance of doing this was very small. Mr. Burwell realized that his condition was critical, and, beckoning me to him, told me that he wished to make a statement he felt might be his last. He spoke with agitation which was increased by an unforeseen happening. For just then a servant entered the room and whispered to me that there was a gentleman downstairs who insisted upon seeing me, and who urged business of great importance. This message the sick man overheard, and lifting himself with an effort, he said excitedly: "Tell me, is he a tall man with glasses?"

The servant hesitated.

"I knew it; you cannot deceive me; that man will haunt me to my grave. Send him away, doctor; I beg of you not to see him."

Humoring my patient, I sent word to the stranger that I could not see him, but, in an undertone, instructed the servant to say that the man might call at my office the next morning. Then, turning to Burwell, I begged him to compose himself and save his strength for the ordeal awaiting him.

"No, no," he said, "I need my strength now to tell you what you must know to find the truth. You are the only man who has understood that there has been some terrible influence at work in my life. You are the only man competent to study out what that influence is, and I have made provision in my will that you shall do so after I am gone. I know that you will heed my wishes?"

The intense sadness of his eyes made my heart sink; I could only grip his hand and remain silent.

"Thank you; I was sure I might count on your devotion. Now, tell me, doctor, you have examined me carefully, have you not?"

I nodded.

"In every way known to medical science?"

I nodded again.

"And have you found anything wrong with me, — I mean, besides this bullet, anything abnormal?"

"As I have told you, your eyesight is defective; I should like to examine your eyes more thoroughly when you are better."

"I shall never be better; besides it isn't my eyes; I mean myself, my soul,— you haven't found anything wrong there?"

"Certainly not; the whole city knows the beauty of your character and your life."

"Tut, tut; the city knows nothing. For ten years I have lived so much with the poor that people have almost forgotten my previous active life when I was busy with money-making and happy in my home. But there is a man out West, whose head is white and whose heart is heavy, who has not forgotten, and there is a woman in London, a silent, lonely woman, who has not forgotten.

The man was my partner, poor Jack Evelyth; the woman was my wife. How can a man be so cursed, doctor, that his love and friendship bring only misery to those who share it? How can it be that one who has in his heart only good thoughts can be constantly under the shadow of evil? This charge of murder is only one of several cases in my life where, through no fault of mine, the shadow of guilt has been cast upon me.

"Years ago, when my wife and I were perfectly happy, a child was born to us, and a few months later, when it was only a tender, helpless little thing that its mother loved with all her heart, it was strangled in its cradle, and we never knew who strangled it, for the deed was done one night when there was absolutely no one in the house but my wife and myself. There was no doubt about the crime, for there on the tiny neck were the finger marks where some cruel hand had closed until life went.

"Then a few years later, when my partner and I were on the eve of fortune, our advance was set back by the robbery of our safe. Some one opened it in the night, some one who knew the combination, for it was the work of no burglar, and yet there were only two persons in the world who knew that combination, my partner and myself. I tried to be brave when these things happened, but as my life went on it seemed more and more as if some curse were on me.

"Eleven years ago I went abroad with my wife and daughter. Business took me to Paris, and I left the ladies in London, expecting to have them join me in a few days. But they never did join me, for the curse was on me still, and before I had been forty-eight hours in the French capital something happened that completed the wreck of my life. It doesn't seem possible, does it, that a simple white card with some words scrawled on it in purple ink could effect a man's undoing? And yet that was my fate. The card was given me by a beautiful woman with eyes like stars. She is dead long ago, and why she wished to harm me I never knew. You must find that out.

"You see I did not know the language of the country, and, wishing to have the words translated, — surely that was natural enough, — I showed the card to others. But no one would tell me what it meant. And, worse than that, wherever I showed it,

and to whatever person, there evil came upon me quickly. I was driven from one hotel after another; an old acquaintance turned his back on me; I was arrested and thrown into prison; I was ordered to leave the country."

The sick man paused for a moment in his weakness, but with an effort forced himself to continue: —

"When I went back to London, sure of comfort in the love of my wife, she too, on seeing the card, drove me from her with cruel words. And when finally, in deepest despair, I returned to New York, dear old Jack, the friend of a lifetime, broke with me when I showed him what was written. What the words were I do not know, and suppose no one will ever know, for the ink has faded these many years. You will find the card in my safe with other papers. But I want you, when I am gone, to find out the mystery of my life; and — and — about my fortune, that must be held until you have decided. There is no one who needs my money as much as the poor in this city, and I have bequeathed it to them unless — "

In an agony of mind, Mr. Burwell struggled to go on, I soothing and encouraging him.

"Unless you find what I am afraid to think, but — but — yes, I must say it,— that I have not been a good man, as the world thinks, but have — O doctor, if you find that I have unknowingly harmed any human being, I want that person, or these persons to have my fortune. Promise that."

Seeing the wild light in Burwell's eyes, and the fever that was burning him, I gave the promise asked of me, and the sick man sank back calmer.

A little later, the nurse and attendants came for the operation. As they were about to administer the ether, Burwell pushed them from him, and insisted on having brought to his bedside an iron box from the safe.

"The card is here," he said, laying his trembling hand upon the box, "you will remember your promise!"

Those were his last words, for he did not survive the operation.

Early the next morning I received this message: "The stranger of yesterday begs to see you;" and presently a gentleman of fine

presence and strength of face, a tall, dark-complexioned man wearing glasses, was shown into the room.

"Mr. Burwell is dead, is he not?" were his first words.

"Who told you?"

"No one told me, but I know it, and I thank God for it."

There was something in the stranger's intense earnestness that convinced me of his right to speak thus, and I listened attentively.

"That you may have confidence in the statement I am about to make, I will first tell you who I am;" and he handed me a card that caused me to lift my eyes in wonder, for it bore a very great name, that of one of Europe's most famous savants.

"You have done me much honor, sir," I said with respectful inclination.

"On the contrary you will oblige me by considering me in your debt, and by never revealing my connection with this wretched man. I am moved to speak partly from considerations of human justice, largely in the interest of medical science. It is right for me to tell you, doctor, that your patient was beyond question the Water Street assassin."

"Impossible!" I cried.

"You will not say so when I have finished my story, which takes me back to Paris, to the time, eleven years ago, when this man was making his first visit to the French capital."

"The mysterious card!" I exclaimed.

"Ah, he has told you of his experience, but not of what befell the night before, when he first met my sister."

"Your sister?"

"Yes, it was she who gave him the card, and, in trying to befriend him, made him suffer. She was in ill health at the time, so much so that we had left our native India for extended journeyings. Alas! we delayed too long, for my sister died in New York, only a few weeks later, and I honestly believe her taking off was hastened by anxiety inspired by this man."

"Strange," I murmured, "how the life of a simple New York merchant could become entangled with that of a great lady of the East."

"Yet so it was. You must know that my sister's condition

was due mainly to an over fondness for certain occult investigations, from which I had vainly tried to dissuade her. She had once befriended some adepts, who, in return, had taught her things about the souls he had better have left unlearned. At various times while with her I had seen strange things happen, but I never realized what unearthly powers were in her until that night in Paris. We were returning from a drive in the Bois; it was about ten o'clock, and the city lay beautiful around us as Paris looks on a perfect summer's night. Suddenly my sister gave a cry of pain and put her hand to her heart. Then, changing from French to the language of our country, she explained to me quickly that something frightful was taking place there, where she pointed her finger across the river, that we must go to the place at once — the driver must lash his horses — every second was precious.

"So affected was I by her intense conviction, and such confidence had I in my sister's wisdom, that I did not oppose her, but told the man to drive as she directed. The carriage fairly flew across the bridge, down the Boulevard St. Germain, then to the left, threading its way through the narrow streets that lie along the Seine. This way and that, straight ahead here, a turn there, she directing our course, never hesitating, as if drawn by some unseen power, and always urging the driver on to greater speed. Finally, we came to a black-mouthed, evil-looking alley, so narrow and roughly paved that the carriage could scarcely advance.

"'Come on!' my sister cried, springing to the ground; 'we will go on foot, we are nearly there. Thank God, we may yet be in time.'

"No one was in sight as we hurried along the dark alley, and scarcely a light was visible, but presently a smothered scream broke the silence, and, touching my arm, my sister exclaimed: —

"'There, draw your weapon, quick, and take the man at any cost!'

"So swiftly did everything happen after that that I hardly know my actions, but a few minutes later I held pinioned in my arms a man whose blows and writhings had been all in vain; for you must know that much exercise in the jungle had made me strong of limb. As soon as I had made the fellow fast I looked

down and found moaning on the ground a poor woman, who explained with tears and broken words that the man had been in the very act of strangling her. Searching him I found a long-bladed knife of curious shape, and keen as a razor, which had been brought for what horrible purpose you may perhaps divine.

"Imagine my surprise, on dragging the man back to the carriage to find, instead of the ruffianly assassin I expected, a gentleman as far as could be judged from face and manner. Fine eyes, white hands, careful speech, all the signs of refinement, and the dress of a man of means.

"How can this be?" I said to my sister in our own tongue as we drove away, I holding my prisoner on the opposite seat where he sat silent.

"'It is a *kulos*-man,' she said, shivering, 'it is a fiend-soul. There are a few such in the whole world, perhaps two or three in all.'

"But he has a good face."

"'You have not seen his real face yet; I will show it to you, presently.'

"In the strangeness of these happenings and the still greater strangeness of my sister's words, I had all but lost the power of wonder. So we sat without further word until the carriage stopped at the little chateau we had taken near the Parc Monteau.

"I could never properly describe what happened that night; my knowledge of these things is too limited. I simply obeyed my sister in all that she directed, and kept my eyes on this man as no hawk ever watched its prey. She began by questioning him, speaking in a kindly tone which I could ill understand. He seemed embarrassed, dazed, and professed to have no knowledge of what had occurred, or how he had come where we found him. To all my inquiries as to the woman or the crime he shook his head blankly, and thus aroused my wrath.

"'Be not angry with him, brother; he is not lying, it is the other soul.'

"She asked him about his name and country, and he replied without hesitation that he was Richard Burwell, a merchant from New York, just arrived in Paris, traveling for pleasure in Europe

with his wife and daughter. This seemed reasonable, for the man spoke English, and, strangely enough, seemed to have no knowledge of French, although we both remembered hearing him speak French to the woman.

"'There is no doubt,' my sister said, 'It is indeed a *kulos*-man; It knows that I am here, that I am Its master. Look, look!' she cried sharply, at the same time putting her eyes so close to the man's face that their fierce light seemed to burn into him. What power she exercised I do not know, nor whether some words she spoke, unintelligible to me, had to do with what followed, but instantly there came over this man, this pleasant-looking, respectable American citizen, such a change as is not made by death worms gnawing in a grave. Now there was a fiend grovelling at her feet, a foul, sin-stained fiend.

"'Now you see the demon-soul,' said my sister. 'Watch It writhe and struggle; it has served me well, brother, sayest thou not so, the lore I gained from our wise men?'

"The horror of what followed chilled my blood; nor would I trust my memory were it not that there remained and still remains plain proof of all that I affirm. This hideous creature, dwarfed, crouching, devoid of all resemblance to the man we had but now beheld, chattering to us in curious old-time French, poured out such horrid blasphemy as would have blanched the cheek of Satan, and made recital of such evil deeds as never mortal ear gave heed to. And as she willed my sister checked It or allowed It to go on. What it all meant was more than I could tell. To me it seemed as if these tales of wickedness had no connection with our modern life, or with the world around us, and so I judged presently from what my sister said.

"'Speak of the later time, since thou wast in this clay.'.

"Then I perceived that the creature came to things of which I knew: It spoke of New York, of a wife, a child, a friend. It told of strangling the child, of robbing the friend; and was going on to tell God knows what other horrid deeds when my sister stopped It.

"'Stand as thou didst in killing the little babe, stand, stand!' and once more she spoke some words unknown to me. Instantly the demon sprang forward, and, bending Its clawlike hands,

clutched them around some little throat that was not there, — but I could see it in my mind. And the look on its face was a blackest glimpse of hell.

"'And now stand as thou didst in robbing the friend, stand, stand;' and again came the unknown words, and again the fiend obeyed.

"'These we will take for future use,' said my sister. And bidding me watch the creature carefully until she should return, she left the room, and, after none too short an absence, returned bearing a black box that was an apparatus for photography, and something more besides, — some newer, stranger kind of photography that she had learned. Then, on a strangely fashioned card, a transparent white card, composed of many layers of finest Oriental paper, she took the pictures of the creature in those two creeping poses. And when it all was done, the card seemed as white as before, and empty of all meaning until one held it up and examined it intently. Then the pictures showed. And between the two there was a third picture, which somehow seemed to show, at the same time, two faces in one, two souls, my sister said, the kindly visaged man we first had seen, and then the fiend.

"Now my sister asked for pen and ink and I gave her my pocket pen which was filled with purple ink. Handing this to the *kulos*-man she bade him write under the first picture: 'Thus I killed my babe.' And under the second picture: 'Thus I robbed my friend.' And under the third, the one that was between the other two: 'This is the soul of Richard Burwell.' An odd thing about this writing was that it was in the same old French the creature had used in speech, and yet Burwell knew no French.

"My sister was about to finish with the creature when a new idea took her, and she said, looking at It as before: — 'Of all thy crimes which one is the worst? Speak, I command thee!'

"Then the fiend told how once It had killed every soul in a house of holy women and buried the bodies in a cellar under a heavy door.

"'Where was the house?'

"'At No. 19 Rue Picpus, next to the old graveyard.'

"'And when was this?'

"Here the fiend seemed to break into fierce rebellion, writhing on the floor with hideous contortions, and pouring forth words that meant nothing to me, but seemed to reach my sister's understanding, for she interrupted from time to time, with quick, stern words that finally brought It to subjection.

"'Enough,' she said, 'I know all,' and then she spoke some words again, her eyes fixed as before, and the reverse change came. Before us stood once more the honest-looking, fine-appearing gentleman, Richard Burwell, of New York.

"'Excuse me, madame,' he said, awkwardly, but with deference; 'I must have dozed a little. I am not myself to-night.'

"'No,' said my sister, 'you have not been yourself to-night.'

"A little later I accompanied the man to the Continental Hotel, where he was stopping, and, returning to my sister, I talked with her until late into the night. I was alarmed to see that she was wrought to a nervous tension that argued ill for her health. I urged her to sleep, but she would not.

"'No,' she said, 'think of the awful responsibility that rests upon me.' And then she went on with her strange theories and explanations, of which I understood only that here was a power for evil more terrible than a pestilence, menacing all humanity.

"'Once in many cycles it happens,' she said, 'that a *kulos*-soul pushes itself within the body of a new-born child, when the pure soul waiting to enter is delayed. Then the two live together through that life, and this hideous principle of evil has a chance upon the earth. It is my will, as I feel it my duty, to see this poor man again. The chances are that he will never know us, for the shock of this night to his normal soul is so great as to wipe out memory.'

"The next evening about the same hour, my sister insisted that I should go with her to the *Folies Bergère*, a concert garden, none too well frequented, and when I remonstrated, she said: 'I must go,— It is there,' and the words sent a shiver through me.

"We drove to this place, and passing into the garden, presently discovered Richard Burwell seated at a little table, enjoying the scene of pleasure, which was plainly new to him. My sister hesitated a moment what to do, and then, leaving my arm, she advanced to the table and dropped before Burwell's eyes the card

she had prepared. A moment later, with a look of pity on her beautiful face, she rejoined me and we went away. It was plain he did not know us."

To so much of the savant's strange recital I had listened with absorbed interest, though without a word, but now I burst in with questions.

"What was your sister's idea in giving Burwell the card?" I asked.

"It was in the hope that she might make the man understand his terrible condition, that is, teach the pure soul to know its loathsome companion."

"And did her effort succeed?"

"Alas! it did not; my sister's purpose was defeated by the man's inability to see the pictures that were plain to every other eye. It is impossible for the *kulos*-man to know his own degradation."

"And yet this man has for years been leading a most exemplary life?"

My visitor shook his head. "I grant you there has been improvement, due largely to experiments I have conducted upon him according to my sister's wishes. But the fiend soul was never driven out. It grieves me to tell you, doctor, that not only was this man the Water Street assassin, but he was the mysterious murderer, the long-sought-for mutilator of women, whose red crimes have baffled the police of Europe and America for the past ten years."

"You know this," said I, starting up, "and yet did not denounce him?"

"It would have been impossible to prove such a charge, and besides, I had made oath to my sister that I would use the man only for these soul-experiments. What are his crimes compared with the great secret of knowledge I am now able to give the world?"

"A secret of knowledge?"

"Yes," said the savant, with intense earnestness, "I may tell you now, doctor, what the whole world will know, ere long, that it is possible to compel every living person to reveal the innermost secrets of his or her life, so long as memory remains, for

memory is only the power of producing in the brain material pictures that may be projected externally by the thought rays and made to impress themselves upon the photographic plate, precisely as ordinary pictures do."

"You mean," I exclaimed, "that you can photograph the two principles of good and evil that exist in us?"

"Exactly that. The great truth of a dual soul existence, that was dimly apprehended by one of your Western novelists, has been demonstrated by me in the laboratory with my camera. It is my purpose, at the proper time, to entrust this precious knowledge to a chosen few who will perpetuate it and use it worthily."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" I cried, "and now tell me, if you will, about the house on the Rue Picpus. Did you ever visit the place?"

"We did, and found that no buildings had stood there for fifty years, so we did not pursue the search." *

"And the writing on the card, have you any memory of it, for Burwell told me that the words have faded?"

"I have something better than that; I have a photograph of both card and writing, which my sister was careful to take. I had a notion that the ink in my pocket pen would fade, for it was a poor affair. This photograph I will bring you to-morrow."

"Bring it to Burwell's house," I said.

. . . . . .

The next morning the stranger called as agreed upon.

"Here is the photograph of the card," he said.

"And here is the original card," I answered, breaking the seal of the envelope I had taken from Burwell's iron box. "I have waited for your arrival to look at it. Yes, the writing has indeed vanished; the card seems quite blank."

"Not when you hold it this way," said the stranger, and as he

* Years later, some workmen in Paris, making excavations in the Rue Picpus, came upon a heavy door buried under a mass of debris, under an old cemetery. On lifting the door they found a vault-like chamber in which were a number of female skeletons, and graven on the walls were blasphemous words written in French, which experts declared dated from fully two hundred years before. They also declared this handwriting identical with that found on the door at the Water Street murder in New York. Thus we may deduce a theory of fiend reincarnation; for it would seem clear, almost to the point of demonstration, that this murder of the seventeenth century was the work of the same evil soul that killed the poor woman on Water Street towards the end of the nineteenth century.

tipped the card I saw such a horrid revelation as I can never forget. In an instant I realized how the shock of seeing that card had been too great for the soul of wife or friend to bear. In these pictures was the secret of a cursed life. The resemblance to Burwell was unmistakable, the proof against him was overwhelming. In looking upon that piece of pasteboard the wife had seen a crime which the mother could never forgive, the partner had seen a crime which the friend could never forgive. Think of a loved face suddenly melting before your eyes into a grinning skull, then into a mass of putrefaction, then into the ugliest fiend of hell, leering at you, distorted with all the marks of vice and shame. That is what I saw, that is what they had seen!

"Let us lay these two cards in the coffin," said my companion impressively, "we have done what we could."

Eager to be rid of the hateful piece of pasteboard (for who could say that the curse was not still clinging about it?), I took the strange man's arm, and together we advanced into the adjoining room where the body lay. I had seen Burwell as he breathed his last, and knew that there had been a peaceful look on his face as he died. But now, as we laid the two white cards on the still breast, the savant suddenly touched my arm, and pointing to the dead man's face, now frightfully distorted, whispered: — "See, even in death It followed him. Let us close the coffin quickly."

Mrs. Bilger's Victory.

EMMA S. JONES AND GEIK TURNER.

THE railroad had killed her muley cow, and the railroad had got to pay for it,— so said Mrs. Bilger.

Mrs. Bilger was a widow lady residing in the suburbs of Grafton, on the hills of Southern Pennsylvania. Grafton is not an imposing place. It is situated in a hole in the woods mowed out by the sawmill, which forms its principal industry. The business life in Grafton consists in feeding this sawmill, and, as it is not a large one, the town cannot be called populous even at its center. The situation of Mrs. Bilger's place, in the outskirts, would have reasonably been called retired if it had not been for the fact that the P. D. & Q. Railroad ran through her front yard. In this way a good proportion of the population of the United States passed through Mrs. Bilger's dooryard. Few, however, stopped, except when some train got stalled at the foot of the grade before her house. The P. D. & Q. engines can climb almost anything but a tree, but occasionally in the winter they had to take two or three starts at this grade; it was the worst on the whole road. Occasionally, also, Mrs. Bilger had calls from railroad men, who stopped to drink at her celebrated spring.

The late Mr. Bilger had left his widow her small house and clearing, an eight-year-old son, a double-barrelled shot-gun, and her muley cow. A few melancholy hens completed the inventory of the estate. Mrs. Bilger, who was a woman of character, made the best of her resources. She herself tickled the shallow surface of her portion of the earth till it burst forth every summer into a sickly grin of scanty potatoes and corn, while her conscientious hens converted the minor by-products of the farm into marketable produce. Her main trust, however, had always been put in her muley cow, who had furnished her a good supply of milk, for which she found a ready sale.

This muley cow would probably not have taken a prize on fancy points at a cattle show; still she was a patient, industrious animal, and a good provider. But at last, unfortunately, the extreme scarcity of provisions drove her to night work, and she wandered onto the railroad track and unintentionally ran against a freight train in the dark. In the morning Mrs. Bilger discovered little more than a fine line of Hamburg steak stretching towards the western horizon. It was a particularly hard blow to her, because she was on the eve of accepting a flattering offer of thirteen dollars for the animal.

There was no doubt in Mrs. Bilger's mind from the first that the railroad would have to settle for her cow. So she informed the station agent the very day following the accident, and after protracted negotiations, which nearly lost the station agent his dinner, the latter agreed to forward a demand for settlement to headquarters. Mrs. Bilger didn't see why he couldn't settle for her martyred cow on the spot, but she was willing to make reasonable concessions. Her final price was twenty-three dollars.

So, after awhile, the station agent forwarded her demand to the division superintendent, and after awhile the division superintendent forwarded it to the division claim agent, and after awhile the division claim agent decided he would send out a man to look up the case. A railroad company does not take unnatural haste in settling up the claims of a poor, ignorant widow. This railroad's fatal mistake was that it did not know what kind of a widow it was dealing with.

It took about three weeks in all for the railroad officials to get around to Mrs. Bilger's case, and Mrs. Bilger, deprived of her chief means of sustenance, was naturally becoming somewhat dangerous. She viewed with increasing displeasure the railroad men in general, and especially those who came to get water from her famous spring.

"Wal, ef they ain't got gall," she was accustomed to say to her Willie in this interval, "killing old muley cow, and then comin' here to get our water."

Finally she decided to give her ultimatum.

"Here, you," she said, when the section hands came up one noon for their daily supply, "you get out of thar. You don't

get no more water out of my spring till you pay for my muley cow you killed."

"What muley cow? We ain't killed no muley cow," said the astonished section hands; but it was no use to conduct a campaign of enlightenment with Mrs. Bilger. The railroad had killed her cow, and to her the section hands constituted a part of one heartless and bloodthirsty corporation, which was responsible. They returned without the water.

The boss, a fat man, who had somewhat of a determined character himself, and who prided himself on his power of invective, was severely sarcastic on their return.

"Gimme that pail," said he, "I'll show you how to get the water." He waddled off with the pail in a truly ferocious manner.

Mrs. Bilger was in the house at the time. The section boss walked triumphantly up to the spring and stooped down to take up the water in his pail. The water was some way down in the ground, being confined in a shallow well, walled with stones, and as he was a very fat man, it took him some time to get down to it. Just as he was about to accomplish his purpose he suddenly toppled over head foremost into the spring with the graceful, tilting motion of a mud turtle falling off a log. Mrs. Bilger had waylaid him with her broom.

The section boss was a very close fit for the spring, and he made up his mind several times before he unwedged himself that he was a drowned section boss. When he finally did get out, spluttering and swearing, he found himself looking into the muzzles of a double-barrelled shot-gun, like a pair of opera-glasses. He fled precipitately without his water bucket.

Mrs. Bilger threw the bucket scornfully after him. "I won't take less'n thirty dollars for her now, cash down," was all she remarked.

After that it was vain for a railroad man to attempt to use that spring. She watched it most of her spare time herself, and when she didn't she had her boy out. Whenever a railroad man came in sight the child's little piping voice sounded the guard mount, and his mother came on duty with her gun. She didn't say much, but she just walked back and forth before the spring with

conscious strength and dignity in her bearing, and deep, hard lines about her mouth. A great many railroad men who had thought they wanted a drink before they saw her, found that they were mistaken and turned away.

By and by, however, the section boss got tired of this sort of thing. There was a good deal of work that year, raising the tracks on that grade, and there wasn't another spring for two miles either way. Finally he decided to negotiate with Mrs. Bilger.

"That's right," said Mrs. Bilger, "you killed my cow and you've got to pay for her. She's wuth jest forty dollars."

So the section boss sought out the road master and told him about the affair, and the road master told the division superintendent. It had been so long since the division superintendent had heard from the station master about Mrs. Bilger's cow that he had forgotten all about it. Besides, it didn't sound like the same cow, anyway, the valuation being so different. So the division superintendent filed another report with the claim department.

About this time, Mrs. Bilger, not hearing anything from her appeal for justice, frequented the station at Grafton a great deal, coming in about train time and talking violently to the station agent. Finally, the station agent agreed to write on again to the division superintendent. By this time Mrs. Bilger's estimated price was fifty-two dollars.

It so happened at this time that the division superintendent was off on a short vacation, and his substitute, in an excess of zeal, filed the third cow report with the claim department.

Before it reached there, however, the division claim agent had visited Mrs. Bilger with a check made out for her first asking price of twenty-three dollars.

"Have you lost two cows, Mrs. Bilger?" said he politely.

"No, I hain't," that worthy woman replied, "only one; but I ain't going to take no twenty-three dollars for it. That cow will cost you just sixty-two dollars now."

"But she wasn't worth any sixty-two dollars," he protested.

"Yes, she was, too," said Mrs. Bilger; "countin' the time I've lost foolin' over the blame thing the last three months, an' all I've had to pay for butter and cheese, sixty-two dollars 's cheap. Be-

sides, you can pay it just as well as not; you know you've got the money. If you don't, I'll take it to the law."

Mrs. Bilger was obstinate, and the claim agent took back his check, and, acting on Mrs. Bilger's threat to go to law, sent over the first two papers on the case to the general claims attorney, intending to see him about it next day. Next day he was called off suddenly to another part of the road. While he was gone the second report from the station agent came along, with a bill for fifty dollars for Mrs. Bilger's muley cow, and, the department claim agent being away, was sent straight to the claims attorney. The three bills confused him.

"What the devil are they doing down there," said the claims attorney when the claim agent came back, "having a massacre of muley cows?"

It took the claim agent some time to explain.

In the meantime Mrs. Bilger began to take the bit in her teeth. She now resolved to suspend traffic generally on the road till they paid some attention to her. For this purpose she secured an old red flannel shirt, and hitching it on the end of an axe helve, began to flag all the trains going up the grade industriously.

"You killed my muley cow, and you've got to pay for her," she said, when the trains came to a standstill. "I won't take less'n sixty-seven dollars for her." It is not necessary to state what the train hands said.

The railroad men finally didn't pay any attention to her red flag at all, so far as stopping went, but as nobody knew just when she might decide to do something serious, like piling up a stone wall on the track, for instance, they watched that flag with considerable curiosity.

And at last she did decide to do something. It was one Tuesday night. She put the boy to bed early; then she prepared for action.

Filling two buckets from the half barrel of soft soap always kept on tap, and taking a bucket in each hand, Mrs. Bilger started out into the dark, and walked half a mile up the grade. Then she artistically applied her soft soap to about a quarter of a mile of the track.

The next train was a freight due from the east about nine

o'clock. She was late that night, and she came down that grade for all she knew how. When she struck that soft soap she slid ahead like a comet rollicking through space; the engine rocked from side to side like a steam launch in a storm. The engineer saw there was something wrong in a minute, and whistled "down brakes" ferociously. The brakemen put on enough power on the brakes to lift her right off the tracks and hold her suspended in the air, but she just plunged ahead through the darkness, squirting soft soap on all the surrounding landscape.

"It's that damned Bilger woman again!" yelled the engineer to the fireman. "What's she done now?"

"Oh, my God!" said the fireman, thinking of his family; "how do I know?"

Then they both held onto the sides of the reeling cab and hoped hard. The engineer swore arpeggios to a sort of running obligato on the whistle. The train went by the station like a demoniac steam calliope escaped from a circus, with a frightened train hand hanging on the brake of every other car. When they finally stopped, two miles down the road, the engineer said he never had such an awful feeling in his life,—only he didn't say it that way. The fireman was quite seasick.

The worst of it was, they didn't have the least idea what ailed them, because by that time all the soft soap was worn off the wheels. They hadn't the time to look around, anyway, because they had to get down on the next siding for the through ten o'clock passenger train.

The express was extra heavy that night, and the engineer had a horrible rate of speed on her when she reached the grade. Nevertheless, when she struck it she stopped short within two lengths. To the wild dismay of the engineer, the big drivers of his engine just whirled around and around like a top. The engine couldn't get up that grade any more than a man can lift himself by his boot straps. Finally the engineer stopped her, and he and the fireman got out to investigate. Up the grade in front of the engine the rails, in the beams of the headlight, stretched in two strangely glistening lines.

"By thunder!" exclaimed the fireman, stooping down; "it's soft soap."

"Now will you pay me for my muley cow?" said a voice from the darkness. "If you don't, you'll never run your darned road again."

It was Mrs. Bilger. Her price had risen to eighty-seven dollars.

It so happened that a very important person was on this train, no less important a person, in fact, than the president of the road. He was in a hurry, too, and he came out of his special car to see what was going on, just as Mrs. Bilger arrived on the scene.

"Well, what's the matter here?" said the president.

"Soft soap, sir," said the excited engineer; "this woman's been daubing up the track with soft soap so we can't run the train, because she had her darned cow killed and they won't pay for it."

"Yes, they will," said Mrs. Bilger; "and it'll cost 'em eighty-seven dollars,— not a cent less."

Mrs. Bilger felt she was in a position to dictate, and she proposed to do so. The railroad president appreciated the situation.

"Well, my good woman," said he, "don't you think you'd compromise for a little less — say seventy-five?"

"Who are you?" said Mrs. Bilger haughtily.

"Well, I'm president of this road," said the great official.

"Well, then, I want eighty-seven dollars for my muley cow," said Mrs. Bilger, "and you don't get her for any less."

This amused the president considerably. He took out his fat pocket-book and counted out a big roll of bills. "There you are," said he, "I'll pay it myself." Then he got Mrs. Bilger's mark on a receipt before witnesses, in front of the headlight; and Mrs. Bilger's muley cow was settled for just five months after its death.

After awhile, with the help of the freight engine below, the passenger train was pushed up the grade, the track having been sanded all the way up.

"That muley cow was a good paying property," mused the railroad president, as he seated himself in his special car. "If she'd given a barrel of milk a day, and had a calf every two months since the time of her demise, she wouldn't have yielded such large returns.

A Defender of the Faith.

BY JOHN D. BARRY.

THE London weather had been fine for a week, and to-day the sky showed patches of blue. George Bird looked out of his window and began to tap on the pane. Hardly a sound broke the silence of the solemn English Sunday afternoon.

"Want to go out?" said he, apparently speaking to some one on the opposite side of Gower Street. The question was really directed to a young man lounging before the fireplace.

"Don't care if I do." The young man yawned and stretched his arms, letting the book he had been reading fall from his lap.

"We might go to Hyde Park."

"*She'll* probably be there," the young man said from behind his hand.

Bird looked quickly around. "Then we won't go."

"Great chance you'll have of meeting her among thousands of people."

Bird turned from the window and dropped into a chair. Then, directing his blue eyes toward his companion, he began to tug at his beard. "Don't you think she's been pretty hard on me?"

"My dear boy, when you get to be as old as I am, you won't take these things so seriously."

"She's so liberal, too; why, she knows all kinds of people in New York — people that her friends wouldn't think of knowing."

"But she draws the line at you," Warren laughed. He had dragged himself from his chair and was changing his cutaway for a frock coat. "Well, if you're going out with me, you'd better get a move on," he said.

"It's just her High Church notions. She wasn't like that before she caught the ritualistic craze."

"Did you tell her so?" asked Warren, pulling his black cravat from under his collar to substitute a white one.

"No, I didn't. I don't care what she believes, as long as it doesn't affect her opinion of me. I'd think just as much of her if she were a Mahommedan."

"What in the deuce is she kicking about, anyway? Is it because you aren't rich? Isn't she impressed by your greatness?"

"She doesn't care anything about my greatness," Bird replied impatiently. "And she doesn't care whether I'm rich or poor. It's all because I can't believe what she believes, and because I can't live up to her standard." A moment later, he added: "She says that literature can't have any good in it unless it's founded on morality."

"Do you mean to say," cried Warren, turning from the mirror, and holding the ends of his white cravat in his hands, "do you mean to say she calls *your* stories immoral?"

Bird smiled in spite of himself.

"She says everything is immoral in literature that doesn't teach a lesson. She told me last night that literature and religion ought to go hand in hand. Those were her very words."

"I'm afraid she's a prig," Warren declared. "There, don't flare up so, sonny. If she was foolish enough to refuse you —"

"She didn't refuse me. She merely put me off, — said we'd be good friends just the same, but we —"

"Same thing. You'll learn that when you're as old as I am. That's the way tender-hearted girls always let a fellow down."

"She said if I'd stop writing about common people, and write about something high and inspiring, and if I'd try to believe in religion as she does, and all that, why, she'd think about it."

Warren began to laugh softly.

"She is a romanticist, my boy. I told you this realism of yours would bring you to grief."

"It isn't my fault if I can't see things in her ideal way," cried Bird fiercely. Then he jumped from his seat, and, after throwing off his coat and waistcoat, began to dress for the street.

Six weeks before this conversation took place, Ernest Warren and George Bird had never met. They knew each other's work in the magazines, however, and when they found themselves together on the *Teutonic* they quickly became acquainted. They agreed to take rooms together in London, Warren having good-

naturedly concurred in Bird's determination to live in that part of the city made famous by Thackeray. This was how they happened now to be domiciled in Gower Street, close by historic Russell Square, with its air of faded gentility — within a short walk of the British Museum. Warren was as pronounced a romanticist as Bird was a realist. Shortly after leaving Princeton he had begun to write novels, attracting attention first with a story of college life. Bird's career had begun in newspaper work, and his success with his sketches of the slums in New York had encouraged him to write for the magazines. When his father died and left him a small income, he gave up journalism to devote himself entirely to literature. Ever since his early newspaper days, five years before, he had known Alice West.

Alice had for several years devoted herself to scientific philanthropy. As a reporter, Bird had often helped her in her work, and they had thus been thrown much together. It was when she had crossed with her mother on the *Teutonic* for a summer in England, however, that he first realized that he was in love with her. During her four weeks in London, he had been with her nearly every day, and it was the result of his avowal of his affection, made while they were walking home from a visit to the Grafton Gallery the day before, that made him so unhappy on this Sunday afternoon.

To-day they found Piccadilly crowded with people. It was the fag end of the season, but many of the fashionables were still in town and on evidence in the Park. They took a seat beside the broad driveway, and for a time Bird devoted his attention to the pretty girls in the carriages, trying to imagine that he wasn't looking for any one in particular. But when they resumed their walk in the direction of the Marble Arch, he sighed.

The greensward of the Park was dotted with groups of people. Some were singing hymns; others were listening to the exhortations of preachers. From the largest group came a rough voice indulging in fierce vituperation. It attracted the two Americans, who stood for a moment at the edge of the crowd, and then slowly worked their way toward the speaker.

From the top of a soap-box, a short, stout man, with a very red face and beard, and small beady eyes, was preaching atheism.

"We're goin' to put an end to superstition. We're goin' to teach men and women to think for themselves. For nearly two thousand years Christianity has gulled the inhabitants of the whole civilized world. They've been born in superstition, an' they've died in superstition. All the injustice, and the oppression, and the wrong in the world can be traced to Christianity. It gives everything to the rich, and nothin' to the poor. Its churches are built out of the money wrung from the life-blood of the poor. D'you suppose the men that build the magnificent temples of Christianity believe in the Christian religion? D'you suppose they're such fools as to be deluded by the lies it teaches? Don't you believe it! They build churches because the preachers help 'em to blind the masses, the toiling multitudes that you and I belong to, the people that keep the world movin'. No, my friends, don't you allow yourselves to be gulled by these psalm-singin' hypocrites. For twenty centuries they've had their way. Now our time's comin'. We'll turn their churches into institutions for the people. We'll shed the light of reason on their lies. In all the years that Christianity has existed, what benefit has it been to the world? Is there any one here that can tell me one thing it has done for humanity? If there is, let him speak out an' say what it is."

He stood with his hand poised dramatically. No one spoke. The crowd had the air of hoping that something exciting was going to happen.

One of the atheist's supporters took advantage of the moment to pass his hat around for "the expenses," as he explained to those who seemed reluctant to give.

"He's having things all his own way, isn't he?" said Bird.

Before Warren could reply, the hoarse harangue was resumed.

"There are thousands of Christians all around us, and not one of 'em dares to speak up for the Christian religion. They know better; they know it ain't got a leg to stand on. They know in their hearts it's a lie an' a cheat. They know they're hypocrites. They pretend to believe in Christianity, just to stand in with the world and make profit out of it. If this ain't so, why don't some of you come up an' deny it?"

As the orator paused again, Bird turned to his companion:—

"Think of these people being taken in by such rot as that."

The little atheist had his eye on the two young men. Bird had spoken in a low voice, but it was plain enough that the import of his words had reached the speaker.

"What did you say, sir?" he cried suddenly, pointing at Bird with a long forefinger. "If you have anything to say against me, you just step right up here an' say it. I'm ready to give this place to you. Come on."

He waited for a moment, with his arm extended. Bird felt his face flush. As he said nothing, the atheist resumed: —

"We don't want any sneakin' business round here. This ain't no Christian church. Now, come right up. There's plenty of room for you. Come up if you dare."

He jumped from the box and stood defiantly beside it. The crowd around Bird pushed him into the center. Almost before he had time to realize it, he stood on the platform. A mass of eager faces confronted him. For a moment he looked dazed; then he pulled himself together.

"I don't pretend to be much of a Christian," he said, sweeping the faces with a glance, "and I'm not the right person to get up here to defend Christianity. But I believe in fair play, and as there's no one else to defend it, I will. I don't want to preach religion. I don't care whether you have any religion or not; but I should like to make you see that when a man says Christianity has done harm, he lies. Just think for a minute what the founder of Christianity did. It makes no difference whether you believe Christ was God or only man. You know that He gave up His whole life to the poor as well as the rich. Instead of doing what this atheist here is doing, He taught the doctrine of unselfishness and courage. There's not one of you here who can deny that. Now you, sir, want to know one good thing Christianity has done. It has held up Christ's example before the world, as an inspiration. It has done a great many other good things besides; but if this were all, it would still be enough to deserve your respect and the respect of every other man."

The crowd burst into applause, and cries of, "Good, good! That's true. Give it to 'im!"

Bird apparently did not hear them. He went on, speaking more rapidly, his face ablaze, his eyes flashing: —

"And what did Christ gain? Nothing but hatred and abuse and a shameful death. But those men were no worse than this atheist, or than any of you people who have stood here and heard this man flinging mud at Christianity."

The crowd, which had at first been surprised by the appearance of Bird and by his outburst, were drawn to him by his enthusiasm and his manifest sincerity.

As he paused for breath, they again burst into applause.

"Give it to 'im, young 'un! Give it to 'im!"

The stragglers near the group, attracted by Bird's impassioned utterance, came up quickly; several deserters followed from the Salvation Army meeting. Many of the listeners round other preachers fell away and turned to the superior attraction.

Just then a long line of small boys in the gray uniform of a charitable institution, headed by a Sister of Charity in a gray dress and wide-spreading cap, passed along the walk near the place where the group was standing. Bird's eye fell upon them.

"Look!" he cried, pointing to the nun, whose back was turned to him and who was walking slowly away. "There's a picture of what Christianity is doing. Look at those motherless children and look at that Sister of Charity, and then ask yourselves if what this man says is true."

He could not have made a better point. The heads of the crowd turned toward the unconscious little regiment of orphans.

"The sight of that Sister of Charity," Bird went on, "ought to remind us of what Christianity has done for women. Before Christ came into the world, women in many countries were considered the inferiors, almost the slaves of men. The real dignity of womanhood wasn't understood then. But Christ changed all that. He taught men that women should be honored, and by honoring His mother, He set an example that has been followed in every Christian country. He made the influence of women one of the most precious influences that exist on earth. There probably isn't a man here that didn't have a mother who believed in Christ, and I dare say there isn't one of you that hasn't heard from her a thousand times the story of Christ's life. You know

what a comfort her faith was to her. But you come here and encourage a man who is doing his best to take that comfort from those who have it. And what has he to offer in its place? Does he offer anything that will make the world better or happier? No; it makes him miserable to see others getting comfort and help where he can't get any. So he tries to rob them of it.

"And now, after abusing you, he wants you to put your hands in your pockets for him. But you're to blame, yourselves. Without your encouragement, such men would soon find that abusing Christianity didn't pay, and they'd go into some other business. But you owe yourselves and the religion of your mothers some reparation for the way you've helped to insult it. You can give money to an atheist for his own pocket, and now, if you have any sense of decency and fair play, give money to the Christians for the support of their charities. There are plenty of Christians round here that will be glad enough to take it and put it to good use."

Bird stepped down from the box and the people gathered around him, clamoring thanks and congratulations, and patting him on the back. One of them offered him money.

"I'm not a preacher," said he, refusing it with an indignation that he afterwards couldn't account for. "Give it to one of the clergymen round here, if you want to."

The little atheist, meanwhile, tried to retrieve his lost ground. But the people had had enough of him. Most of them turned away, leaving but a fringe of supporters around him.

As Bird pushed through the struggling mass toward the nearest exit of the Park, he wondered where Warren was; in the crowd somewhere, probably.

But he couldn't wait for him; he felt a wild desire to hurry home, and then to rush up to his room and hide himself there. Now that his outburst was over, he felt overwhelmed with mortification. His face was hot and his body was tingling; he remembered that he had the same sensation years before, when he thrashed a school bully who for months had persecuted him. In spite of his shame, he felt exultant, almost radiantly happy. After leaving the Park, he continued to walk rapidly, turning instinctively toward Gower Street. When he arrived at his

door he felt a shock of surprise. He had observed nothing on the way; he had been in a kind of dream.

Two hours later, Warren entered.

"Well, sonny," he said, "you did yourself proud this afternoon."

"I suppose you mean I made an ass of myself," retorted Bird, feeling his face grow hot again.

"I confess I thought you were going to. But you stirred even *me*. It was a good speech, my boy, a little tautological, perhaps, but with the right ring in it. Of course, it wasn't argument. But you got there, just the same. I didn't know you had it in you. You did stir 'em up, though. There was one person you stirred up especially."

"Do you mean the little atheist? I could hear him as I was trying to get out of the crowd."

"No, I don't mean him." After a pause, Warren added mysteriously, "A lady."

"A lady!" Bird's face grew red. He walked toward the bed.

"Yes, a young lady, a pretty lady, an American lady," Warren laughed.

"You — you don't mean to say that *she* was there? Oh, what a fool I've made of myself!"

Then, after a moment, "Look here, Warren," he said, "what did she say?"

"Oh, well, now, you don't want me to repeat what a lady said in confidence, do you?"

"I suppose she guyed me. Oh, you might as well speak out. I can stand it. I suppose you went home with her."

"Exactly. Her mother and Miss Griggs walked discreetly behind. Nice girl, Miss Griggs, eh? Nice eyes and hair. Better style than these English girls."

"Oh, bother Miss Griggs! Tell me about Alice."

"Miss Griggs almost wept," Warren went on, with his mocking laugh. "She said it was the most *beautiful* thing she ever heard in her *life*. And I cracked you up to the skies. I said —"

"Never *mind* what you said. What did Alice say?"

"Oh, she wasn't there then. That was in the hotel parlor. She went right up to her room as soon as we got there. By the

way, Mrs. West wants us to come round to-night at eight o'clock and have supper."

Warren devoted the rest of the afternoon to letter-writing, but Bird was too nervous to work, and he feverishly paced the room. He wondered if Mrs. West's invitation meant that Alice had said nothing of the episode of the day before. He had often heard Alice declare that she thought it was mean of girls to tell of their offers. How noble it was of her to keep it to herself! Then, too, how fine it was of her to say she hoped they'd be just as good friends as ever; better, perhaps, now that they understood each other so well! She might have asked her mother to invite Warren and himself for supper to show that she forgave his presumption. He became so excited at the thought of her angelic qualities that, in his eagerness to see her, he arrived with his companion at the hotel twenty minutes before the appointed time.

He felt sheepish, as he ascended in the lift; he was afraid that Mrs. West and Miss Griggs would guy him for his adventure of the afternoon; Alice, he was sure, would treat it with silent contempt. So, on entering the little drawing-room where the servant had preceded them, he was startled at being seized by two matronly hands and flooded with congratulations, first by Mrs. West and then by Miss Griggs. As for Alice, who came forward looking like Galatea, her face pale, and her fair hair waving over her forehead, a faint smile on her lips, she merely said, "I'm glad you could come," and stood apart while her mother's rhapsody went on. But her face had flushed when Bird took her hand, and was still as red as his face had grown.

"Oh, don't!" he cried. "That idiot of an atheist forced me into it. Please don't say anything more about it."

"Well, let's not stand here like statues," said Mrs. West, leading the way into the other room. "Come in here, where the table is spread. It's ever so much more cheerful."

Miss Griggs and Warren followed, and Warren carelessly closed the door behind him, leaving Alice alone with Bird.

Alice was about to open the door again, but before her hand could turn the knob, Bird intercepted it.

"It was awfully good of you to let me come to-day," he said. "I — I want you to know that I appreciate it."

"It was good of you to be willing to come," she replied.

"I can see now I had no right to speak to you as I did yesterday. It was a mean advantage to take of your friendship."

"Oh, no, please don't say that," she cried helplessly. "You — you make it harder for me. It was conceited and silly for me to talk like that. I've only just realized how silly it was — since I came home from the Park to-day."

His face flushed. "Do you mean that you thought it wasn't worth while — that I couldn't appreciate how true all you said was — because I made such an ass of myself this afternoon?"

"No! what you did was splendid and brave. It made me see how much better you were than I ever could be."

"I — better than you?" Bird gasped incredulously.

"Yes, a thousand times better. I've been so narrow, I've only thought about one way of being good. But now I can see there are a great many ways."

A great joy shone in Bird's face. "Alice!" he said, in a long breath. "Do you mean — oh, it's all a mistake, but if you do mean that you'll give me another chance — that you — oh, if you do — if you *can* mean anything like that, I'll bless that atheist till the end of my life."

Her head was turned from him, and one hand was hanging limp by her side. He took it very gently. She did not draw it away.

"Alice," he said, "I love you more than I ever thought I could love any one. I didn't know there was anything so beautiful in the world as the love I feel for you. I know I can't live up to your standard, but if you'll only let me try to make myself worthy of you, I'm willing to wait as long as you wish!"

She kept her face turned from him.

"You make me feel ashamed of myself," said she.

"It's all right," he laughed, "if you don't feel ashamed of *me*."

He drew her close to him and kissed her. Then, as she didn't resist, he kissed her again.

"I love you, dear," he whispered.

Tim's Vacation.

BY L. E. SHATTUCK.

HE wasn't much of a boy as far as size goes, for he stood hardly four feet high, and he had a thin, peaked face which made him look considerably smaller than he really was. And he wasn't much of a boy as far as looks go, either, for he wore a rusty old black coat, a grimy bosom shirt, several sizes too large for him, without any collar, and a pair of cast-off pants badly worn at the knees. His feet were encased in a pair of ragged tennis shoes, and perched on the back of his shock of red hair was a dingy old straw hat with the band and a part of the brim missing.

To the casual observer our Tim was a ludicrous combination of boy and clothes; but to those who looked closer the little thin face under the old straw hat, and the long, thin arms and hands which emerged from the frayed sleeves of his ragged coat, added an element of pathos to this mirth-stirring picture.

Tim was elevator boy in the office of *The Morning Post*. Where he came from no one seemed to know, but from the first day of his arrival the youngster became a general favorite. He was liked upstairs by the editors, reporters, and compositors, and downstairs by the press men, mailing-room employees, and by the men in the office and business department. In short, there was not a soul in the establishment who did not know and like the sociable little fellow who took so active an interest in all that was going on.

But it was the local room where Tim stood in the highest favor, and where he most delighted to spend his spare time. During his noon hour he often helped the city editor edit "copy" by handing him his mislaid shears or mucilage bottle; and when any of the men on the city staff came bustling in with a "scoop" it was Tim who aided him in "landing" it by running the old

elevator up the five stories at a terrific rate of speed. Indeed, he was a born newspaper man and could appreciate the value of news of whatever kind almost as quickly as the best reporter on the force.

Occasionally we bantered the boy about his personal appearance.

"It's a shame, a downright shame, Tim," Tom Burns, our police reporter, would say, "that a man of your capabilities, holding the position that you do, and pulling the salary that you do, should go about in such a rig as that. It's a disgrace to the office. Why don't you take a brace, Timmy, and slick up?"

To all such remarks Tim would listen calmly until the conclusion; then, turning upon his tormentor a withering glance and drawing himself up to the extreme height of his diminutive stature, he would reply, with a saucy wag of his head, "Look here, if you take me for a Vanderbilt you've slipped yer trolley, that's all."

"I think Tim's got a girl, and wastes all his money on her," Dick Johnson, our society man, would chime in.

"Girls be blowed," was the usual disgusted response to this sally. "I don't cut no ice wid girls;" and little Tim would disappear down the hallway in response to a call from the elevator bell, leaving the local room in a roar of laughter.

Tim had been with us about six months, when, one summer evening as I entered the elevator car, the little fellow accosted me with, "Say, Bill, look at this." He addressed all the men on the local force by some contraction of the first name, and none of them took it amiss, although more than one was old enough to be the boy's father. As he spoke, the boy pulled a thumb-marked envelope from his ragged coat and handed it to me. Glancing at the address I read in the familiar cramped hand of Mr. Hopper, the managing editor, "Mr. Timothy O'Brien," while down in the lower left-hand corner, enclosed in brackets, was the inscription, "Manager Elevator Department."

"Read it," said Tim proudly.

This is what I read:

"MR. TIMOTHY O'BRIEN,

"*Dear Sir:* — In the assignment of vacations yours has been

fixed for the week beginning June 14. Wishing you a most enjoyable time, I am,

"Very respectfully yours,

"LEON H. HOPPER, *Managing Editor.*"

"What der yer think of that?" asked Tim.

"Think? why, I think it's great," said I, as I handed back the precious document. Really, the situation was delicious. Not only had kind old Mr. Hopper remembered the little elevator boy with a vacation, but he had forwarded him a formal notification similar to those sent to every man on the staff.

From a knitting of the boy's brows, however, I saw that something more was expected of me concerning that notification.

At length he said slowly, "Say, Bill, what do you do with a vacation, anyway?"

A jocose remark rose to my lips, but it died away at the sight of the genuinely puzzled expression of the thin little face, and a hard lump rose in my throat. That last question of Tim's gave me a momentary glimpse of another side of the little fellow's life, and set me thinking. Could it be possible that he had never been on a vacation?

"Haven't you ever had a vacation, Tim?" I asked.

"Nixie," was the reply. "Yer see, I've had to work steady ever since I was a kid. I went to the park once 'n awhile for de afternoon, but yer wouldn't call that a vacation, would yer?"

That hard lump rose still higher in my throat, and I experienced watery feelings about the eyes.

"No," I replied, "that wasn't much of a vacation, Tim. A real sure enough vacation is where you go out of the city and have a splendid time."

"Go out of der city?" asked Tim, eyes and mouth wide open at my reply. "Where der yer go when yer get out of der city?"

"Oh, there's any number of places," I answered. "Some people go to the seaside and some to the mountains."

"Say, I think I'd like the mountains best," said Tim. "I ain't much stuck on water" — a statement borne out by the condition of his hands and face. "Say, a mountain's awful high, ain't it?

Don't they have elevators there? Maybe I could get the job of running der machine at night."

That last question went to my heart. I had been brought up on a farm among the White Mountains, and for half an hour that noon I talked to Tim of the joys of country life, trying to instil into that cramped little soul some vague idea of the bigness, and freshness, and beauty of the region among the New Hampshire hills.

To all this Tim listened at first much as a blind man might when informed of the joys of sight; but when I finished my eulogy by asking him to go home with me and share my vacation among the mountains his eyes sparkled with delight.

"Will I go?" he cried, prancing about like a young colt. "You bet I'll go, but — " He paused in his demonstrations of joy and a troubled look settled over his face.

"But what, Tim?" I asked. "What's the trouble now?"

"Say, Bill, how is it about yer pay when yer go on a vacation?" he asked. "Yer see," he went on in a hesitating voice, "the rent's pretty near due, an' mother can't pay it alone."

On learning that every man in the office received pay for the time he was on his vacation just the same as if he had worked, the boy's face cleared.

"Say, that's slick, hain't it?" he exclaimed, and, whistling merrily, he rushed off to answer an elevator call.

That night at about twelve o'clock came a telephonic call from Burns.

"Tell Raymond that I've run across a double murder in the Polish district," was the message. "I'm going down there for full particulars, and say that I want to have Tim come to the 'All Night Polish Coffee House' for copy at one o'clock. The police aren't onto it yet, and it will be a big scoop."

Upon learning that he was to have a hand in the landing of a "murder scoop," Tim, for the second time during the day, pranced with joy.

"All right, sir," he replied, after listening to the city editor's instructions, his black eyes sparkling with the genuine newspaper instinct; "I'll get that story up here so red-hot it'll sizzle your hands."

An hour later Burton, the night editor, came into the local room, frowning anxiously.

Any signs of Burns' murder story?" he asked the city editor. "I'm holding the first page open for it; the copy 'll have to be here inside of ten minutes, or we can't get the paper out in time to catch the early trains."

He had scarcely finished speaking when a terrific crash sounded through the building, followed by a shrill, piercing cry. In an instant every man in the local room was on his feet and rushing down the corridor in the direction of the elevator.

Almost with the echo of the crash and scream a premonition of their meaning had clutched at our heart-strings. Yet, accustomed as we were to scenes of suffering and hardship, not one of us but looked with blanching face upon the sight which awaited us. There upon the floor, near the elevator doorway, lay little Tim, the blood gushing from his poor crushed legs. As the boy's eyes singled out the night editor from the crowd gathered around him he held up one weak hand clutching a roll of manuscript.

It was Tom Burns' murder story!

Then in a faltering voice the little fellow said:

"I'm sorry I'm late, but I've landed the scoop, haven't I? You see, the cable broke, an' I couldn't stop 'er. I made a jump for it, an' if my foot hadn't slipped I'd been all right."

"Yes, you've landed your scoop, my boy," said the night editor as he took the copy from the little blood-stained hand, and handed it to the foreman. "But I'm afraid —" and then the big man suddenly knelt by the boy's side, great tears rushing down his cheeks.

The next moment a great wave of emotion swept over the crowd gathered in the hallway. Among them were men who prided themselves on their hardihood, men who had been accustomed to look unmoved upon the scenes of frightful murders, terrible railroad fatalities, and grisly horrors of every degree. But the sight of the dear little fellow, whose life had grown so close to our own, lying there bruised, broken, dying,—and still triumphant in his success,—swept away the barriers of the sternest self-control. Some screened their eyes; a few, sick with horror, swayed, half fainting, from the hall. One big, gaunt fellow,

turning to the wall, buried his head in his arm and wept like a child.

Meantime everything within our power had been done to make the little fellow easier. As I elbowed my way to where he lay, his head propped by a bundle of coats, his wounds stanched with damp cloths, he motioned me to bend over him.

"Tell 'em not to feel so bad," he whispered. "It won't last long."

"Don't say that, Tim," I answered, with would-be cheerfulness. "When the doctor comes he'll bring you round all right. You know we couldn't spare you from *The Post*."

But Tim knew best.

When the doctor arrived a few minutes later his verdict was almost immediate.

"Fatal internal injuries. Can't live more than fifteen minutes. Do what you can to make him comfortable here," he whispered to those crowded around him.

But, though the words were scarcely audible, Tim noted the anxious expression of the kindly eyes, and understood.

"It's no go, is it, Bill?" he said, smiling faintly up into my face. Then, as I again bent over him, he half raised himself in my arms, his dimming eyes flashing one last ray of their old light.

"Say, Bill," he murmured, "don't tell the old woman what's happened. It'd break her all up. Tell her — just tell her I've gone on my vacation."

Wet Horses.

BY ALICE MACGOWAN.

AS I walked down the street of this little Panhandle town — built right where we boys used to chase mustang and hunt buffalo — I saw something that carried me back on the trail further than my mind ever likes to go.

It was just a rough cage of wire netting, about five feet high, sitting out in front of the "Cowboys' Retreat," with two big mountain eagles in it.

I set my palm against the thing, and leaned down, and looked in at them. They must have been kept there a good while, I thought, and were used to the curiosity of their inferiors, for they didn't notice me at all.

They sat there in the degradation of captivity; their eyes, that used to look the sun square in the face, were like lead. Their big wings, that were made to carry them a quarter of a mile at a stroke in the clean air of heaven, struck — only half spread — against both sides of the cage at once, as the eagles flopped awkwardly from one perch to the other.

I'm not soft-hearted. I guess likely I was as much so by nature as most people; but I've had a good deal to toughen me. The cattle business in all its details, including some occasional wholesale starving and freezing in bitter winters; the necessary cruelties of the trail, branding and shipping; the life in general on a wild frontier, I think, has a tendency to stiffen up overtender sensibilities. But there was a reason why these eagles, sitting dull and hopeless in their low, cramped prison, and with no prospect of freedom ahead, got uncommonly close to me.

I went in and had a drink with the man that keeps the place, and found him a pretty decent sort of chap. He told me how he came to get the eagles of the fellow that trapped them, and that he'd had them nearly a year. I had a notion that he took them

on a bar bill, and was sort of tired of them, for I got him to sell them to me for a hundred dollars. Then I took them out to one side, where a lot of fools wouldn't be shooting at them, and interfering with me, and turned them loose. The saloon man and a good share of the population took distant observations of me, wondering, I reckon, what sort of pious crank had struck the town.

When the cage was lifted off them the eagles stood a minute or so, turning their heads about, lifting and trying their wings. Then they rose heavily, side by side, right up till they looked like swallows; then sailed off, straight as arrows, as though they had seen the snowy tops of the Rockies, four hundred miles to the northwest.

Why did I throw away a hundred dollars to turn a couple of miserable, worthless birds loose out of a cage, like a Sunday-school teacher?

I love a match — a square, stand-up game — even to the finish; I would any time ride far and pay big money to be in at a bloody bull-fight. But I always hated to see a thing that's brave, and wild, and savage in its nature, in captivity. I'd break a trap any day to let a rattlesnake out, even if I shot it the next minute.

But it was more than this feeling that was at the bottom of my little deal in live stock of the upper air. It was the remembrance of that experience of mine in old Mexico, along in the latter part of the seventies.

I hate to be made to remember that time. Something in me flinches at it, like a pony that's been struck in the face flinches at a raised hand. It was — well, like the judgment bar, and the big book, and the graves giving up their dead, and the secrets of all hearts being uncovered.

My partner and I went down to old Mexico in seventy-five. I was twenty-five, and Wade a year or so younger. We both had a little money, about a thousand dollars apiece, that we'd made from trail work, or droving, and various quiet ways, such as a little side business in branding with an end-gate rod, or anything that came handy; and Cap. Cameron, an old partner of Wade's, who was down in Mexico getting rich, hand over fist, sent him word that there was big money to be made there in "wet horses."

I've heard "wet horses" described as stock smuggled across from old Mexico into Texas, and having just swam the Rio Grande; and again as stolen horses, brought and offered for sale while wet with the sweat of a night's chase.

Anyhow, wet horses are understood to be the sort that owe some government a duty, or that have got mixed up in their own minds as to their proper owners; and the horses in which we dealt were very damp indeed.

Cap. took us to a magnificent old Don, who was high up in the Mexican army, and had the buying of the horses for the cavalry.

We had an interview. It was a wonderful interview. There was port wine — the finest I ever tasted — and not a word said on either side that the whole government wouldn't have been welcome to hear. But for all the ceremony and Spanish style, the Don gave us the points. When we left, the understanding was as clear as if we had bargained like tenderfoot horse traders.

We were to bring him anything in the shape of horses, procured wherever (and however) suited us, receive a rattling price, and no questions asked. The Señor Don got his take-off out of the price, of course; but he was a gentleman, and left us still the kind of profit that would have made millionaires out of us in a pair of years, if everything had gone right.

We got the horses, mostly, away up in the mountains of Southern Cohahuila, for about one third of their value. Gathered up over a wide district, as convenience might serve the gentlemen who furnished them to us, they were naturally of all sorts, ranging from somebody's well-bred saddler down to the meanest little runts and scrubs; but for the most part they were poor stuff.

They were stolen, every hoof of them. But that was not our business. We did not even know those who actually did the work. It was done by regular gangs of horse thieves, and we bought direct of the leaders.

We always went after the horses heavily armed, and had six or eight Mexican drivers, also armed, to take them back. We carried the money with which we paid for them in gold; and in that nest of robbers and cut-throats, where a man's life would be stamped out of him in a minute by one of those sneaking assassins, for the price of a drink of *pulque*, it was business lively

enough to satisfy even Wade and me, who had been esteemed tolerably fly cowboys, as cowboys went, back in West Texas and the Panhandle, in the seventies.

About nine o'clock one brilliant, moonlight night, we were coming along a narrow mountain pass in Zacatecas. Cap. Cameron was ahead, with a little bunch of horses and four drivers.

Wade and I were riding at the rear of our bunch, for every cent we had in the world was in bags of coin, on a little gray mule, just in front of us. We had brought it all to buy a large drove which we had got word would be ready for us, but there was a failure somewhere, and we were going back with only forty horses. It looked queer. Cap., and Wade, and I, were on the watch, riding with hands on our pistols, and all our arms ready.

We came to a place where the road just ahead made a dip, turned a little to one side, and ran through a black shadow, cast down by a bunch of *nopals* on the height above. Cap. rode forward, and his voice came back to us out of this shadow and dip in a fearful yell and a string of curses. Then there were pistol shots and more yells.

They say it takes nine tailors to make a man, but only the Lord who created them knows how many miserable greasers it takes. All the Mexican drivers in both Cap.'s outfit and ours sneaked away like scared coyotes. They were bribed or won over, I suppose; but they would have done the same anyhow, likely.

Wade and I, and one white boy we had, went ahead with cocked pistols; and there in the pass — partly in the moonlight, as white as day, partly in the black shadow — we had a desperate hand-to-hand fight. That little dark hollow was full of long Mexican knives. There was no run away for us, and the others, who had, maybe, not expected such resistance, were bound, now that they were in for it, to have the little gray mule and his heavy coin bags.

When it was done Cap. lay stretched out dead and ghastly; his face, scowling and furious, covered with bloody knife wounds, his clothing torn almost off him by clutching hands and wayside cactus thorns.

The Texas boy was dead, not far away, in the shadow.

Wade lay unconscious, bleeding from three wounds, any one of

which would have taken him to his last account in twenty-four hours.

I had a pistol-shot wound in my head, that injured the skull but did not break through it; and in my shoulder was a horrible, gaping hole of a bayonet thrust.

I never knew how many of the other fellows we had done for, but I'm sure we didn't owe them anything. I fainted from loss of blood, and the next I knew, I found Wade and myself in a dirty little 'dobe hut, with our wounds dressed, in a sort of way, and some water and grub beside me. I could hear a sentry shuffling up and down at the front, and one at the back of the house. The roof was partly gone, and I judged by the moonlight that it was about one o'clock.

Wade lay and died with his head on my knees. The moonlight, through the broken roof, poured over his face; and at first he looked up and talked to it like a baby. But after awhile he got wild, and broke out all at once: —

"Great God, boys, it's awful — it's awful — it's hell! I never thought nothin' much about it — never till now. To live like this — year after year! I reckon God made us — we're put here somehow — an' 't seems to me we's meant to be ruther good. We must 'a been, fer look at some men — not preachers, neither — clean, honest, always a-payin' every cent they owe; never a-swearin' to 'mount to nothin', nor puttin' uv the'r brands onto nothin' 't ain't the'r own; no more thinkin' o' gittin' drunk 'n 's if they wasn't no sich thing; an' they look at shootin', an' knifin', an' killin' uv a feller man ez awful — awful — couldn't do it, nohow. Not angills, ye know, not angills. I've always felt like a angill — here in this world — 'd be a mighty uninterestin' monotonous chump to chum with — course, well-meanin', but no savey. But I know they's sich men ez them — I've knowed folks 'et knowed 'em. Plantation Purvis wuz most that away — an' then think o' us — our ways, an' our lives! I've got drunk — always. I've lied, an' swore, an' gambled, an' fleeced fellers out o' the money they'd earned — w'y jest commonly. W'y, when I wuzn't nothin' hardly but a kid, an Slavin an' me wuz a-workin' that Bar Y range, we mavericked, an' burnt out brands — right along. I went away, up the trail to old Fort Dodge, so pore little Sallie Ellis couldn't

git to me with her cryin' an' beggin' me to marry her! O Lord, she's worse 'n even I am, now! Am I a-goin' somewhere 't I'll always see her pore little face,— 'twuz so pretty when I first seed it — an' hear her cryin', 'O Wade, please, Wade! Oh, I ain't got no mother, Wade,— an' I'm so young! Oh, if you don't, Wade, what'll I do — what'll I do?' Dear Lord — dear, kind, pityin' God — sweet, merciful, kind-hearted Jesus — oh, feel sorry for me! Honestly, in a sort o' way, I didn't know no better — I thought 'twuz smart. Don't count it all in ag'in me — not all! For ez shore ez I'm a-layin' here to die, I sorter didn't know no better — I thought 'twuz smart. 'T seemed to me 't these fellers I wuz a-speakin' uv — wuz a pore sort o' men, an' — missed a heap — an' 'twuz smart — to — oh,— God — don't—"

He raised one hand, or tried to, like a little child if you go to strike it, and died with that last word and motion.

I tell you it was the worst thing I ever had to take. It was bad enough before — wounded, stiff, weak with pain and bleeding, stuck like a rat in that miserable hole of a Mexican prison, with every hope of being shot as soon as I could stand up, and Wade laying there in that awful white moonlight dying — this was enough. But when he weakened so at the last, and I couldn't get him to know me, nor quiet him anyhow, when he would run on, and on, and on, with that string of terrible talk about things that a well man, free, and among his own people, wouldn't want to have called up to him, it seemed to me as if my time had come to answer up to something that had been keeping a tally on me.

They were strange feelings. I shook all over — and I never was counted a coward. I wished — I didn't know what. I was sick — sick of it all; but to be dead — well, being dead didn't seem to me, like it sometimes had, a good way to end it, and be done. If I could go back and be a child, and try it all over again — but that seemed a mighty long, uncertain way.

I straightened Wade out in the deep shadow, where the moon couldn't get at that look on his face, and drank every drop out of my little pocket flask; and after awhile I got to sleep.

Well, I laid in that cursed jail eleven months. Eleven long, dragging, almost hopeless months, without a word of English to

hear or read; with nothing to do but eat, and sleep, and think — and I'm not a man that has any liking for that last amusement.

I always hated worse to be hindered than to be hungry. I ran away from home and my father's authority when I was fourteen; and since that time, whether things were bad or good with me, at least there was nobody who could say to me, "You shall," or "You shan't," or lay a straw across the path I pleased to take.

I had lived in the kind of country, and lived the sort of life, calculated to make this almost solitary confinement torture.

I used to lie all night and dream of the plains of West Texas — air, light, distance — room for whole nations of people — and wake to find myself — me, that used to have it all for mine — shut in four 'dobe walls.

I used to own a mount of eight ponies, the best in the whole cattle country. I remembered chasing mustang, running antelope and wolves, and hunting buffalo on them, upon those plains where it looked as if you could ride from daybreak till dark, and from horizon to horizon, without a break or a barrier.

And here my limbs were shriveling in disuse. I could go fifteen feet against a dead wall, and fifteen feet back, against another. And my blood crawled through my veins where it used to leap and laugh.

It was torment at first, torture, hell. Then it was gnawing, cankering, moldering misery.

It was in the summer of '76, in the struggle for "God and Liberty" between Lerdo and Diaz, that this happened. It was a straggling bunch of thievish guerrillas—called themselves Lerdo's men — that had taken us, our horses, and our money. I never could tell why they didn't shoot me, to save my board bill and the trouble of guarding me. They had several spells of debating it, but it was always put off for some reason.

There were times when I'd have been glad enough to have them do it. I hadn't a cent to bribe with, nor any friend who might be reached. And yet, generally, there stayed by me a sort of hope that I would get out of it, after all.

And I did. I was waked one morning from my dreams of liberty by the sounds of rapid firing. There was a big fight going on outside, sure enough. At the noise, and the thought